

APPROPRIATION (RECURRENT 2023–24) BILL 2023
APPROPRIATION (CAPITAL 2023–24) BILL 2023

Second Reading — Cognate Debate

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

MS C.M. COLLINS (Hillarys) [2.55 pm]: It is my pleasure to rise and make a contribution on the 2023 appropriation bills. I commend the Treasurer for handing down yet another strong budget that demonstrates responsible management of the state’s finances. The McGowan Labor government for the sixth year in a row has maintained a strong economy, again dismantling the falsehood that somehow only conservative governments are good economic managers. A number of current pressures created by global economic headwinds are impacting other states and countries around the world, yet Western Australia’s economy continues to be the strongest of all states and one of the top-performing economies in the world.

Through this budget, the McGowan Labor government will deliver initiatives to address the key issues and challenges facing our state. It will deliver cost-of-living support. It will provide further significant investments in our health system. It will address the housing shortages. It focuses on ways to decarbonise and continue WA’s transition to clean energy. Strong economic activity has seen WA employment climb to a historic high, with record full-time employment. This is in part due to more and more women going back to full-time employment, which is up by over 10 per cent. Our government’s strong budget position means we can focus on what truly matters to Western Australians. I feel like I have used the word “strong” at least five times already, but that one six-letter word really sums up the state of our budget. We have reduced our state net debt by almost \$16 billion compared with the projections left by the Liberals and Nationals, meaning that we will not burden future generations with mountains of debt. There is so much in this budget, but I chose to go over just some of the key highlights.

We have heard a lot from other members about the cost of living. Perhaps that is because it is the number one issue facing many of our constituents right now. There is no doubt that the rising cost of living has hit Western Australian households hard. With global inflationary pressures and national interest rate increases, many people are starting to feel the crunch, and a lot of people are not eligible for a commonwealth benefits, yet they are still doing it tough. This budget will provide cost-of-living relief to everyone. One of the ways it will do this is it will provide all Western Australian households with at least \$400 of energy bill relief in the form of two \$200 credits—one in July and one in November–December. This will make households better off than if we simply froze electricity bills. Constituents could save up to \$250 through these credits. It is worth noting that this is the third electricity credit in three years, which is upwards of \$1 400 in savings. These credits have been very well received by constituents in the Hillarys electorate. We will provide targeted relief to those who need it more, with \$826 of total support available for around 350 000 households.

One of my favourite graphs from the 2023 budget is the one that stipulates the electricity costs of each capital city in Australia. Electricity prices were illustrated in Perth as being far lower than in any other capital city, with the cost in New South Wales going up by over 20 per cent last year. This is down to the WA Labor government’s sensible decisions in the past to retain ownership of our electricity assets and have a gas reservation policy.

Another highlight is health. Our government is continuing to commit to putting patients first. Part of this budget is \$2.7 billion of additional investment in our health and mental health system, bringing the total new investment to \$10 billion this term. All this funding will help deliver quality health care for Western Australians. It will deliver more beds for our hospitals, more nurses, more doctors and reforms to ease pressures on our emergency departments. Australian Medical Association (WA) president Mark Duncan-Smith recently said —

... the \$2.7 billion spend on health and mental health would go a long way to improve long-running issues in the health system.

Dr Duncan-Smith says the promise to increase the number of beds and reduce hospital occupancy will help reduce ambulance ramping and deliver a safer and higher quality health system.

The total investment of \$10 billion over just three years is 18 per cent above the national average. Spending like this enables our government to embark on a series of major reform processes to address the root causes of some of the more challenging aspects of health delivery being faced in WA and across the country. The initiatives include the digitisation of medical records in every hospital and going electronic to futureproof WA hospitals; funding to attract and retain more workers in Western Australia; and alternatives to emergency departments, such as getting people into the National Disability Insurance Scheme and aged care. We are committed to phasing in nurse-to-patient ratios in every Western Australian hospital within two years, which is a historic reform. Ramping figures are down by 25 per cent compared with last year.

I have often spoken in the past about Joondalup Health Campus, the major hospital in Perth’s rapidly expanding northern corridor. I will not spend too much time on that today, but it will receive funding of \$267.4 million for

redevelopment to ensure that the hospital can continue to deliver what local residents need. This is a jointly funded project between the state and federal government.

Housing is another issue that is often raised with me by constituents in the Hillarys electorate. The signs of housing stress are clear across Australia and around the world. Although WA's situation is nowhere near as critical as the situation in the eastern states or overseas, there is no doubt that there are huge pressures on our housing system. In this budget, it was announced that an Office of Homelessness will be established to better coordinate the state's social housing stock. My office receives one or two emails a week alerting us that there might be a homeless person struggling somewhere in the electorate. We contact the Department of Communities, which will send someone from an outreach program to interview these people and put them in contact with crisis accommodation. It has worked successfully so far.

It has been heartbreaking to see the challenges that many all over our communities are facing, and supply is a critical pressure. We are moving ahead with development and planning approval reforms to ensure that more housing is created closer to the city and jobs. We are trying to get more quality multi-dwelling proposals that have the capacity to have a great design and provide an economic boost into many parts of the metro area. The Planning and Development Act 2005 will be amended to ensure strategic development approvals can be assessed faster and with more consideration of state significance. We need to get a pipeline of a mix of housing. Councils will retain the authoritative edge on good planning through managing their own town planning schemes to place developments where they would best succeed. WA's *Foundations for a stronger tomorrow: State infrastructure strategy*, released in July last year, looks beyond annual budget cycles and attempts to examine the situation in a holistic way to prepare us for the risks ahead. In 2020, 200 000 households required some form of housing assistance from the state government. By 2030, another 45 000 households will need that assistance. The strategy notes —

Housing affordability is an entrenched structural issue across Australia ...

In recent years, these factors have led to a spike in the number of people on the priority public housing waitlist. That is why this budget provides an extra \$750 million boost for housing supply and housing choice initiatives, and a \$450 million increase in funding to the social housing investment fund. We are thinking outside the box in funding successful new programs, such as through our announcement of the \$49 million 100 homes regional supportive landlord model.

As members will have noted in the news, Perth's building and construction industry requires extra support to build capacity to meet some of these challenges. Some of our biggest and best builders are at capacity and accepting no more work, so we need to ensure that this industry has the capacity to play a leading role in providing shelter for those who need it. That is why, in this budget, we announced \$48 million in training initiatives to boost the residential construction workforce. New apprentices will receive a \$2 000 training completion payment to kickstart their successful building careers. A \$55 million funding package will upgrade water infrastructure to open up new development potential for housing across Perth. We are increasing our social housing commitment to deliver 4 000 additional houses to ensure Western Australians can access shelter, and with it, a secure future.

Another area I want to talk about is our transition to renewable energy. The government is taking action on climate change with a \$3 billion investment, which will include delivering our plan to decarbonise electricity production and move towards cleaner, affordable and reliable energy. We know about the Kwinana battery energy storage system, opened by the Premier and the Minister for Energy, which stores and distributes green energy into the south west interconnected system. This high-tech energy solution is absorbing excess solar energy created by the wealth of small-scale rooftop solar across WA's metro area. Early last year, 3 000 extra homes were installing solar each month, adding another 191 megawatts of energy generation capacity to the south west interconnected system. Western Australia is a leader in solar energy and, as of June 2022, produced 815 watts of small-scale solar per WA citizen. WA citizens are doing the right thing when it comes to investing in renewable energy and turning their homes into miniature power plants. The state government is realising the potential of this energy revolution by investing more into these battery solutions. That is why the big-ticket item in this budget is the funding of an enormous 2 000 megawatt battery in Collie. A \$2.8 billion funding package will build this incredible new asset for WA's power security. When the sun goes down, these batteries will release stored energy back into the grid, providing renewable energy for WA households and assisting us to transition away from dangerous fossil fuels.

I am going to skip the section on hydrogen and go to transport, something that constituents in the Hillarys electorate might relate to more. There have been huge projects going on locally, both on Mitchell Freeway and Marmion Avenue, which I will touch on. Arguably, the most important infrastructure project that has been happening at a local level is the expansion of the smart freeway. Mitchell Freeway has had lane widening and although that has caused some disruption in recent weeks, constituents have already raised with me that they are now starting to see the benefits of having an extra lane.

It is important that as Perth grows we take a proactive approach to transport corridors to ensure that everyone can avoid the pain of congestion at peak hour. Constituents recently celebrated, as I said, the recent reopening of the Hepburn Avenue southbound freeway entry ramp. We have more and more coordinated signals and new electronic signs to display speed reductions and give motorists advanced notice of closures, but, more importantly, we are seeing more safety barriers, noise walls, emergency stopping bays and emergency breakdown lanes, and that will provide and minimise traffic flow disruptions and improve safety. Metronet is, of course, a major part of the planning process to avoid congestion, but we can deliver a fantastic experience for both public transport users and motorists.

Main Roads did an extensive survey back in 2021 asking for feedback on Marmion Avenue. Throughout that consultation, a number of issues were raised around intersections. The speed limit has now been changed. I have certainly had a few complaints about that, but the idea was that this would ensure minimal fatalities and reduce the number of accidents at those intersections, which had really increased in the last five to 10 years. It has not been a popular choice, but it is the responsible choice given the number of accidents and the history, as I have just mentioned.

In this budget, \$965 million has been invested in education and training. I am proud of that and very pleased that education has been a key focus in the electorate of Hillarys. The build for Hillarys Primary School is well underway and, hopefully, will be finished at the end of this year. The Springfield Primary School rebuild will go out to tender soon and, hopefully, it will be finished by March 2025. The Duncraig Senior High School rebuild is well underway as well. We have spent \$13 million to continue to attract international students back to Western Australia.

This WA budget has continued to put us in a strong position to support Western Australian families and communities and it continues our record investment in the state's future.

MS E.L. HAMILTON (Joondalup) [3.12 pm]: I rise to make a contribution on the Appropriation (Recurrent 2023–24) Bill 2023 and the Appropriation (Capital 2023–24) Bill 2023 and the McGowan government's seventh budget, which delivers for my Joondalup community and the people of Western Australia. It provides support for households, businesses and our broader community while maintaining our commitment to responsible financial management. We are experiencing the strongest economic growth in nine years. We are paying down debt and a record number of Western Australians are in full-time work. Our Labor government is delivering the necessary infrastructure, investments and support to ensure our entire WA community benefits from our nation-leading economy so that the benefits are felt for generations to come.

A response to the budget speech from the member for Joondalup could not begin without talking about the significant investment in our health budget, given that my electorate is home to Joondalup Health Campus, which is growing rapidly and will become one of the largest hospitals in WA. A third of our state budget sees investment in our health system, and I commend the Minister for Health for her work in the portfolio. A record \$2.7 billion of additional investment is being delivered to our health and mental health systems. There are major upgrades and expansion underway locally, but what I am most proud to see with the investment in our mental health support and services is the investment in our new 110-bed mental health unit. Just recently, I toured the site with my parliamentary colleagues and I must say that this new site is state-of-the-art and a welcome addition to the northern corridor.

It will not be surprising to hear that there has been a growth in the need for mental health support for young people in particular. For some time, I have advocated for youth mental health beds, and this is being delivered. Most importantly, we are expanding support to help more people in the local community. This significant expansion of mental health services in our northern suburbs will see the mental health unit for the first time cater for young people aged 16 to 24 years and older adults aged over 65 years. The design of the new unit is drawn from extensive clinical and consumer input as well as incorporating the latest research to create a contemporary model of care that is recovery-based, with integrated hospital and community services to achieve the best possible results for consumers. It is clear that every element of the design of the new mental health unit will support consumers in their recovery.

The unit will provide an innovative light-filled environment with multiple recreation zones and large shared open lounge and dining areas, including visitor spaces. It includes landscaped courtyards, activity areas and a gymnasium. Centrally, a purpose-built recovery hub has been incorporated, which will allow patients to connect with their family and friends, community groups and peer support within a safe environment. This investment also expands our government's response to the infant, child and adolescent task force report by delivering further local mental health support for young people.

A large number of the staff who work at our Joondalup Health Campus, particularly the nurses and midwives, made their start in the profession locally at Edith Cowan University. ECU produces some of the highest quality nursing and midwifery graduates in WA and is recognised as a top 100 nursing program worldwide. ECU also features WA's only nursing and midwifery degree. I joined the Premier and Minister for Health at ECU recently where they announced a \$28.5 million scheme to attract and retain midwives in our system. The scheme includes up to \$12 000 of payments towards HECS–HELP loans for 350 newly qualified nurses and midwives who start

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their career in regional Western Australia, with priority given to hard-to-staff sites. Funding is also included for wraparound support for up to 1 200 graduates in our hospitals.

We are delivering one of the most comprehensive and far-reaching skills and training policies in the country with our fee-free TAFE courses that are encouraging people to try a new career or to upskill. Our investment in TAFE locally is delivering a new \$20.5 million light automotive workshop at Joondalup TAFE. The new building will help train people in new and emerging technologies, including electric vehicles, drones and horticulture. Students are expected to begin training in the new centre from semester 2 of 2024. This will build on Joondalup's reputation as a centre for innovation. Again, the Premier was up in our electorate, along with the Minister for Training, earlier in the year, in about February, for a turning of the sod on this site. We were also joined by managing director Michelle Hoad and a number of students undertaking training in different fields. They included a young woman re-entering the workforce after a number of health challenges, but she explained in detail to us that she was really appreciative that she could jump straight into training using one of these fee-free courses. Try to say that a few times quickly. That is a tongue twister!

Our budget also continues to support the Labor government's delivery of the largest expansion of WA's public transportation network in a century. Our \$5.9 billion investment in Metronet will deliver 72 kilometres of new rail with 23 stations. I talk about Metronet, and have done for many years, because of the very important Yanchep railway line extension, which will connect the northern corridor with our Joondalup city centre. It is very important to connect people living in the north with Joondalup and our city centre, our growing CBD, to allow for the growth of our local economy. It has always been Labor governments that build heavy rail. The first 2.7 kilometres of track on this project were laid just on Tuesday, with a total of 14.5 kilometres of track slated for the northern extension of the Joondalup line. The new connection will drive further investment and economic activity across our northern suburbs and particularly in Joondalup.

Our investment in public transport also extends to buses. Joondalup is at the forefront of public transport innovation as the result of our trial of electric buses on local roads, something that I began advocating for with local residents in Edgewater in 2019. Joondalup's bus routes are now serviced by four new battery-electric buses as part of a trial of this new cutting-edge renewable technology. The trial is growing and we see these routes now extending to select suburban bus routes originating from Joondalup and Whitfords stations. In the first 12 months of this trial, the four electric CAT buses have carried more than 250 000 passengers and travelled more than 140 000 kilometres. They saved 230 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions in the process.

Following the successful electric CAT bus trial, 18 new electric buses will be commissioned to service Perth's CAT bus routes. Also, electric charging stations will be installed at Elizabeth Quay bus station to support these new buses. The McGowan and Albanese governments are working together to manufacture WA's new electric bus fleet right here in Perth as part of a \$250 million state and federal commitment. Our government has put forward our contribution of \$125 million that will signal a new era for WA's bus services. This joint investment will ensure that the next generation of Perth's public transport will be built by local workers, with over 100 new jobs created by this initiative, and more than 300 existing workers transitioning to jobs in cleaner technology, all originating from the work we have seen in Joondalup.

An extra \$965 million has been allocated in this budget to education initiatives and training for jobs of the future. As a parent, I understand the importance of our children receiving a good education. There are 17 schools in my electorate. That is why I am pleased about this government's investment of \$325.1 million for the delivery of primary and secondary education, including increased supports for students with a disability and for eligible students with an additional language or dialect. This continues our previous budget's investment to support young people as we transition to new and emerging industries.

Joondalup is a hub for jobs of the future and innovation. Just last week I attended the 2023 Western Australia Cyber Security Awards. I had the honour of presenting the Outstanding WA Cyber Security Educator of the Year Award to Dr Michelle Ellis, who works at the Joondalup campus of Edith Cowan University, where she helps women and young people make the most of a career in cyber. Cybersecurity is front of mind in much of our community, as it is for individuals and some organisations. Joondalup is world-leading in the cyber capabilities that are being developed. We are training locally the global workforce that will be required.

With the increasing risk of data breaches, fraud and cybercrime, we know that it is crucial that individuals and businesses alike know how to protect themselves. I recently had the opportunity to welcome our federal Minister for Home Affairs; Cyber Security, Clare O'Neil, MP, to a roundtable discussion in Joondalup. We discussed how we are well placed to tackle the emerging challenges and opportunities in the cyber industry and, more importantly, to also grow the workforce that is required. Some outstanding work is taking place at ECU. One in five cyber graduates come from our campus in Joondalup. Outstanding collaboration is already occurring locally as we develop

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this cyber graduate workforce and produce the skilled and knowledgeable professionals who will help protect our communities from cyberthreats.

There is a longstanding and strong relationship between Edith Cowan University and the TAFE sector. I am looking forward to seeing a connection with one of our local high schools when it offers certificate courses in cyber to students from the beginning of next year. I have been advocating and working closely with all the groups involved to ensure that we provide students with a seamless transition from secondary education to vocational studies, with the potential to complete tertiary studies, should they wish, giving more students an opportunity to gain the knowledge, skills and pathways required to help protect our digital world.

The McGowan government also increased the community sporting and recreation facilities fund by \$15 million. This will boost community participation in sport and recreation through the development of sustainable and good-quality facilities. We have a number of active sporting groups across all codes in the Joondalup electorate. It is very important that we increase support by way of funding to give kids every opportunity to participate in grassroots-level sport. I always said to my two teenagers when they were growing up that it is so important to be involved in an activity outside of school. Making sure students in our electorate have every opportunity to participate is fundamental. Since Joondalup is a relatively built-out suburb, we need to ensure that we are very clever with investments and opportunities for children to participate in all types of sport.

Earlier in the year, I visited Joondalup Bowling Club during an evening bowling session and looked at the greens. It was great to see all members of the community out and about. The club recently received CSRFF funding to convert its grass to a synthetic playing surface and install additional floodlighting. As a patron of Joondalup Bowling Club, it was a pleasure to attend its presentation dinner last weekend. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate every nominee and award winner and also congratulate Joondalup Bowling Club on achieving premier league status recently. I encourage all sport and recreation groups in Joondalup to keep an eye out for the next round of CSRFF funding, applications for which open midyear.

Another area I want to talk about relating to the McGowan Labor government's investment is the culture and the arts area. The Minister for Culture and the Arts is particularly fond of talking about the wonderful achievements of our local talent. I had the pleasure of attending a screening recently. I was invited by a local family in Connolly. Filmmaker and producer Tayla Burton and her two co-creatives, James and Sanjay, invited me to a screening of their film. The trio are students at SAE Institute Perth. Their film *Nothing Special* is a light-hearted superhero movie filmed in Pingelly here in WA. It has already received a wide array of commendations and awards, including the best action/superhero movie award at the Cannes Film Festival in France. The Labor government recognises the importance of artists and creative industries in fostering dynamic and active local communities. We are supporting local creatives like Tayla, James and Sanjay by progressing WA's first dedicated screen production facility in Malaga. This screen production facility will support our investment in WA's creative industries by attracting film, TV and screen projects to our state.

We are also delivering \$150.3 million for the redevelopment of Perth Concert Hall to provide the West Australian Symphony Orchestra with a permanent home and re-establish the site as a premium cultural precinct. My Joondalup community is home to the Joondalup Symphony Orchestra. I have had the wonderful pleasure of attending many of its evenings, particularly in the lead-up to Christmas, when I attended a wonderful family performance with my family. I am sure that this investment will have important flow-on effects for orchestras like this in my electorate. Investment in culture and the arts is a critical part of our plan to diversify our economy and create new local job opportunities for Western Australians. It will have an impact on electorates such as mine.

This budget also delivers another significant cost-of-living package to support every Western Australian household. A \$400 household electricity credit—our fourth since coming to government—will be delivered to every Western Australian. Households most in need will receive an additional credit, for a total of \$826 in support. For the first time, small businesses will receive the electricity credit. Eligible small businesses will receive a \$650 credit on their energy bills. This is expected to benefit around 90 000 businesses, including many in the Joondalup electorate. There are around 13 000 small businesses across the City of Joondalup. I try to be very active and engage with them in a number of ways. I regularly involve myself in shout-outs on social media and Go Local raffles to engage our local community to support local businesses. A great network of businesses support and engage with community sporting groups through donations and sponsorships in the northern corridor.

Over Christmas I joined the award-winning restaurant Chapters Bistro at its Christmas lunch for vulnerable and disadvantaged locals. The lunch was a massive success. For many attendees, it was the first time they had enjoyed a Christmas meal at a lovely restaurant like that. Chapters Bistro won an award for best European restaurant at the 2022 WA Restaurant and Catering Awards for Excellence and a bronze in the National Restaurant and Catering Hostplus Awards for Excellence.

As a local member of Parliament, it is great to receive so much support for the activities I hold and for events like Australia's Biggest Morning Tea that I will be hosting later this month in support of the Cancer Council WA. I am

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receiving wonderful support from our business community, which is great to see. This is the sixth Australia's Biggest Morning Tea I have held. It will also be a celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of Australia's Biggest Morning Teas held by the Cancer Council here in WA. We will have a guest speaker, Kristina Coomber, from the Cancer Council. It is wonderful to be able to engage our local year 10 students from Mater Dei College who will be coming to work some of their community service and volunteer hours at the event. Again, there is wonderful networking and collaboration happening locally.

[Member's time extended.]

Ms E.L. HAMILTON: I also want to acknowledge that this week we are celebrating a couple of notable events, activities and special days. Just yesterday, we celebrated Wear Orange Wednesday to acknowledge the wonderful support of the SES and organisations like the Wanneroo–Joondalup State Emergency Service that supports our WA community in times of need and challenge. I also want to acknowledge that tomorrow is National Walk Safely to School Day. I will be walking with our Minister for Early Childhood Education to Beaumaris Primary School. This day encourages families and students to take every opportunity to walk to school and get active when they can. I note also that tomorrow is P&C Day WA. We will acknowledge the fantastic organisations and parent groups that work hard to support our local students in schools. I give a big shout-out and thankyou to everyone. I acknowledge also that it is National Volunteer Week.

I will bring my contribution to a close by congratulating the Premier; Treasurer on this budget. We have a stable and progressive government that is creating local jobs while setting up the state for a very bright future. I commend the bills to the house.

MS C.M. TONKIN (Churchlands) [3.31 pm]: I rise this afternoon with pleasure to support the second reading of the Appropriation (Recurrent 2023–24) Bill 2023 and the Appropriation (Capital 2023–24) Bill 2023. It is a bit of a tongue twister. This budget delivers for all Western Australians on cost-of-living assistance; investments in health and mental health; affordable housing and addressing homelessness; climate action; economic diversification; infrastructure; education and training; safe, strong and fair communities; community cultural and sporting infrastructure; and investments in regional WA. These commitments are made in the context of world-beating economic management and fiscal responsibility.

I am proud to be a member of the McGowan Labor government because it is a government that demonstrates commitment to Labor's social, economic and environmental values, while delivering surpluses and paying down debt. These are values that resonate in my community because they are the values that the people of my community tell me are important to them. Our government is here to make life better and fairer for Western Australians, and to ensure that the next generations inherit a state in which they can prosper and enjoy opportunities. As a grandmother of three grandchildren in this state, I am especially committed to this agenda.

How does this budget deliver what is important to the people in the Churchlands electorate? It may surprise some, but we are a community of haves and have-nots, but I am proud to say that we are a community that is full of contributors. Those people, regardless of their personal circumstances, join in, volunteer, enjoy participating in sport and recreation, revel in the beautiful natural places by which we are surrounded and want to make life better for others. It is also a community that values quality education and the opportunities it brings. It is concerned about access to needed health and mental health services and supports, and understands the challenges of the rising cost of living and housing affordability. It is a community that knows that we must take decisive action on climate change.

Children in the electorate of Churchlands enjoy access to some of the finest primary and secondary schools in the state. This year's budget increases funding to WA schools by \$500 million to a total of \$6.4 billion. This includes the ongoing construction of stage 2 of Bob Hawke College, which will enable the doubling of the school's capacity, with more classrooms, a performing arts centre, dance and visual arts studios, and music and media rooms. The opening of stage 2 will reduce the pressure of numbers at Churchlands Senior High School that are already beginning to trend down. My grandson, who is 10 and attending West Leederville Primary School, is very much looking forward to attending Bob Hawke College. I am sure that by the time he gets there in a couple of years, it will be a fantastic finished school with all the stages developed.

The design and eventual construction of new STEM classrooms at Churchlands Senior High School is underway. These classrooms will augment the quality of STEM education at this school. Churchlands has an amazing extra curricula STEM club that extends the innovation, technical and scientific know-how of students. They will relish these new STEM facilities.

We have many health and medical professionals living in the Churchlands electorate. We are very grateful for their dedicated work. Investment in our public health system is therefore a high priority, with an additional \$2.7 billion in this budget, bringing our total new investment since 2021 to an amazing \$10 billion. Western Australia has the highest per capita spending of any state on our hospitals. We are spending 18 per cent above the national average,

but this government has always been digging deep to do more, and this budget is a reflection of that attitude. Mental health is of particular concern for people in Churchlands, so the additional \$420 million spend will be welcomed. This includes \$201 million to expand mental health services, and a much-needed boost of \$219 million to upgrade Graylands Hospital.

Cost-of-living supports are broadly welcomed in our community. State government fees and charges have been limited to an increase of 2.4 per cent in 2023–24, which is well below inflation. It is well below the sorts of cost increases that are being imposed on people in other states. The \$400 energy bill relief for every household will be very helpful. Those eligible for the energy assistance payment will receive total additional support of \$826. This is well targeted to those most in need. The seniors cost-of-living rebate will also be increased in line with inflation to \$104 for singles and \$156 for couples. Small business will also benefit from a \$600 credit on their power bills. This cost-of-living assistance is of great value to the people in our community.

People in my electorate are vitally interested in addressing climate change, and many are playing their part by investing in reducing their household emissions through electrification by installing solar panels; using efficient electric appliances, including cooktops; and installing heat pumps for heating water and for air conditioning. Increasing numbers are also driving electric vehicles, reducing one of the highest sources of household emissions in our state and, indeed, our country. Western Australia adds the equivalent capacity of a new power station every year in rooftop solar. This presents some challenges for the stability of the grid, but our investments in large battery storage will make this increasing renewable input manageable. I notice that the large battery in Kwinana is ready to go. Its operation will be augmented by a \$3.5 billion investment in this budget for the decarbonisation of the electricity grid. This will support the phasing out of coal-fired power generation by 2030, thereby setting us on the path to net zero emissions by 2050. This will mean that the electricity used in our households and businesses will be increasingly clean and green.

Included in this headline budget commitment is \$2.3 billion for Synergy to build a massive 500-megawatt battery energy storage system in Collie and a second 200-megawatt battery in Kwinana. There is also funding in the budget for Synergy to build a new wind farm at King Rocks, and an expansion of capacity at the Warradarge wind farm near Eneabba, which will generate a combined 210 megawatts at full capacity.

Last year Minister Bill Johnston was welcomed to a very well attended community sundowner in my electorate, focusing on the challenges and opportunities for the decarbonisation of the electricity grid. One of the issues flagged by the minister was the challenges to grid capacity as industrial users seek to decarbonise their operations through electrification. It was therefore pleasing to see that, to address these challenges, \$126 million has been allocated for early planning for the network upgrades necessary to support fast-tracking government and industry transition to net zero.

In that context, today, thanks to Floreat local Graeme Stanway of State of Play and his associate, Wembley resident Chris Nelson, the Parliamentary Friends of Clean Energy heard about the efforts of the Electric Mine Consortium participants to decarbonise their mining and industrial operations. This is an exciting consortium because it brings together a number of mining and industrial players to jointly problem-solve and find ways to accelerate the decarbonisation of their industries. I am proud that ours is a government that not only acknowledges the challenges of addressing climate, but also backs its policy with strong budgetary commitments.

Before I end this brief contribution, I want to add that ours is a community that cares for the dignity and wellbeing of its members, and as such, I expect that we will vote strongly in favour of recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Constitution through the Voice. A yes vote respects our First Nations peoples, whose long-overdue recognition in the Constitution will give them the voice they need to shape their futures to the benefit of all of us. With that, I commend the bills to the house.

MS M.M. QUIRK (Landsdale) [3.44 pm]: I commend all my colleagues for their very erudite and thoughtful reflections on the budget. I was heartened over the weekend to hear on the ABC's *Insiders* program the federal Treasurer Dr Jim Chalmers reiterate the commonwealth government's ongoing commitment to Western Australia to maintain the existing arrangements for the distribution of GST revenue to this state. I am told that the federal Treasurer made a similar commitment at this morning's breakfast at Crown Perth.

This budget, and particularly Premier McGowan's budget speech, reinforces that any diminution of the GST amount is not negotiable. As he rightly pointed out, our state has around 10 per cent of the nation's population but accounts for nearly half of its exports. We need to invest in infrastructure and our people to maintain that excellent outcome. We must, however, remain vigilant. It reminds us that the concessions the McGowan government finally secured in 2018 from the Morrison government, fully supported by the then federal Shorten opposition, were hard-fought and should not be lightly surrendered. In his budget speech, Premier McGowan observed –

Madam Speaker, our fight to maintain our fair share of the GST continues.

If not for the 2018 GST reforms that Western Australians secured, which provide a 70% floor to our GST share, our State would only receive about 10 cents in the dollar based on our population share.

Extract from Hansard

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I take comfort in the assurances from the Prime Minister and Federal Treasurer that the GST floor will be maintained. However, the calls from eastern State commentators—and Premiers—to unwind the 2018 reforms continue.

Since the Howard government introduced the GST in July 2000, WA Labor, on behalf of Western Australia, has fought a persistent and unflagging campaign for a better deal. Western Australia's position became progressively worse over the intervening years.

In response to a question in August 2016, the then Premier Hon Colin Barnett set out the dire situation. He stated —

Can I just briefly state the situation. Any fiscal measure should be judged on its fairness and its economics. In the matter of fairness, I think it is an overwhelming case. Western Australia, as everyone knows, gets back just 30 cents in the dollar. The big states—New South Wales and Victoria—both get back about 90 cents in the dollar, and Queensland, for some reason, gets \$1.17, South Australia \$1.41, Tasmania \$1.77 and the Northern Territory \$5.28. WA loses this financial year \$4.7 billion in GST. That should be of concern to every Western Australian. In dollar terms this is perhaps even more striking.

He went on to say —

In that first year, Western Australia received \$2.375 billion. Sixteen years later, we received \$2.035 billion—actually less in dollar terms. In the meantime, the GST pool of money had grown from \$24 billion to \$60 billion, and our dollars actually went down. In the meantime, the population of Western Australia —

...

Not only did the GST pool go up from \$24 billion to \$60 billion and the dollars WA received actually fall, at the same time the population of Western Australia rose from 1.87 million people to 2.6 million people—another 730 000 people to educate and look after their health. That is the outrage of it. That is the fairness case—overwhelmingly unfair to the people of this state.

The then Premier went on to say —

Under the GST from 2000 on, the lowest share was New South Wales at 84c in 2005. We are at 30c. There is no precedent either way for what has happened to Western Australia. Can I conclude: the fairness thing, the inequity and the breakdown of the GST in the Commonwealth Grants Commission process is self-evident. The decision on distribution is not up to the states. The states have a role. The states' approval, universal approval, is required to change the rate in the GST or the coverage of the GST—for example, to fresh food—but the distribution is the responsibility of the federal Treasurer alone on the advice of the grants commission.

There is one other point I want to make and that is the economic case. When the GST was introduced, it was because of tax reform—that Australia was too reliant on direct income taxes, a lack of incentive. The GST allowed an indirect tax to make us more internationally competitive in line with other OECD nations. John Howard had the inspiration to make that change to the tax system to allocate the revenues from the GST and give them to the states, and in return the states gave up their rightful share of income tax collections. It was a swap and it would give the states a stable growth source of revenue. It has not worked out that way; it has failed economically because of the grants commission process. Malcolm Turnbull recognises the tax is unfair and that it fails Australia economically. The commitment is that when Western Australia's share rises above a floor level—I have advocated 75c; it might be 70c—it will be implemented for all states; so Western Australia, and no other state, will face that.

That was from 16 August 2016. Despite fairly strident comments like that, former Premier Barnett proved incapable of persuading his Liberal colleagues of the need to remediate this very inequitable position. It was not until 2018, when Labor was in government, that former Treasurer Wyatt and Premier McGowan were able to get an undertaking from the federal government.

The other thing we need to remember about how federal–state financial relations evolved is to include consideration of special purpose payments from the commonwealth to the states, as well as agreements between governments on matters like housing and health. The Commonwealth Grants Commission advises the Australian government on how federal funding should be distributed between state and territories to ensure equal access to services. The formula that it has deployed from time to time has proved highly contentious. It has always been argued that special purpose payments, containing conditions as they often do about how that grant is to be spent, diminish the autonomy of the states and fail to address particular local conditions on needs, whilst being from time to time funded on ideology and not needs. The area that originally comes to mind is the federal government deserting the area of Aboriginal housing in remote communities.

As Premier Barnett noted in his comments, as part of the GST deal, the states were asked to abolish a number of state taxes on the understanding that revenue from these would be more than adequately replaced by the distribution of GST funds to the states. Given this complexity and the interaction of the components, in 2001, a review of commonwealth–state funding was commissioned by the governments of Western Australia, New South Wales and Victoria. The *Review of commonwealth–state funding: Final report* by Professor Ross Garnaut, of climate change fame, and Professor Vincent Fitzgerald was commissioned by what I call the three donor states. It proceeded on the basis —

New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia (the donor States) receive a share of GST revenue that is less than their share of the national population, while all other States (the recipient States) receive a greater than population share of GST revenues ...

That is set out in figure 3.3 on page 43. The final report concludes —

There are disincentives to adopting policies that encourage development for donor States and for States shifting from being a recipient to a donor State. Advantages a State enjoys from providing a service are effectively redistributed to supposedly disadvantaged States. Western Australia loses substantial revenues from mining royalties when these funds are shared between States with smaller resource sectors. Western Australia argues that while it has valuable natural resource endowments, revenue sharing is not based on the rents generated from these endowments (i.e. profits in excess of returns commensurate with capital invested in exploration and development). Moreover, the return of royalties to the State needs to be seen in relation to the State’s extensive efforts to promote development and provide supporting infrastructure and services. This demonstrates the difficulty facing States that attempt to promote growth and reduce the cost of service delivery. Whatever other benefits might be derived by a State from successful, growth-oriented policies, fiscal benefits are largely redistributed.

Those observations are made on page 148.

This might seem like ancient history; however, it is only when we reflect upon why Western Australia finally got its rightful share that we can counter the growing chorus, especially from other states. It also has to be conceded that for many years, Western Australia was a mendicant state. Our opponents would readily remind us of that now that the tables have well and truly turned.

By way of an aside, the GST battles coincide with my experience in political life. As parliamentary secretary to former Premier Gallop, I participated in a committee that was formed with senior Treasury officials and policy advisers to address the inequities of GST and federal funding that prevailed following the implementation of the GST. As Minister Assisting the Minister for Federal Affairs, I travelled with Premiers Gallop and Carpenter to Council of Australian Governments meetings. I observed, even at that time, when many of the other states were also Labor, that when it came to funding, every state nevertheless put self-interest ahead of anything else, including the federalism model. It is not only with interest, but also my wholehearted approval that I noted this in the Treasurer’s speech —

In this Budget, we are escalating our efforts to defend our fair share of the GST.

We have allocated funds to boost the dedicated team within Treasury to safeguard our fair share. Our very own GST fairness fighters.

This team will ensure we put forward our best evidence and best arguments to maintain a fair share of the GST for Western Australia.

Some might say it is *deja vu*, but, certainly, the sharks are circling.

With some prescience, when the Morrison government secured the latest GST arrangements in 2018, the erudite and wise economics writer Shane Wright, in his article in *The West Australian* of 4 October, made the following observations —

A solution to the decade-long injustice of WA’s GST share is almost within reach.

...

... brewing since the State and Territory treasurers asked Scott Morrison, then the Federal treasurer, to model the details of his planned GST salve.

Morrison has promised \$9 billion extra, all out of Canberra’s coffers, to fix the GST system even if that fix was a long way from what had been proposed by the Productivity Commission.

That solution came with a promise that no State or Territory would be worse off.

But State treasurers, never shy in trying to squeeze more money out of Canberra, wanted to be reassured that this no-worse-off clause was real.

That reassurance never came, delivering the sight yesterday of Liberal and Labor treasurers holding out their hands like a collection of Olivers pleading “please sir, can we have some more”.

While the proposed legislation goes to the technicalities involved in the Government’s plan, the accompanying explanatory memorandum of understanding only goes as far as saying that it “seeks” to leave no State worse off.

...

By topping up the GST pool to get every State and Territory on board, the Government has bought into every future GST bunfight ...

...

All of which ignores the most important issue—none of this matters until 2021–22 when the allocation system is supposed to start changing.

Between now and then about \$2 billion in cash will rain on the WA Budget.

The proposed 70¢ and then 75¢ floor, which the Productivity Commission also recommended against, won’t be seen for at least two elections and many changes in the economy.

All the while, WA voters watch on and wonder.

As I said, those comments were quite prescient given they were made in 2018. Having said that, the argument continues. Mr Shane Wright has now decamped to the eastern states and he continues to write about this issue. In fact, he wrote another article in November 2022 headed —

Cost of Morrison’s WA GST deal blows out by \$20 billion as debt hits record high

In those observations he states —

A deal put in place to placate Western Australia when its share of GST revenue was tumbling is on track to cost the nation’s taxpayers 10 times more than originally forecast, helping drive up federal government debt and interest payments to record levels.

...

Morrison struck the deal at a time WA’s share of the tax pool had fallen to an all-time low of 30 cents for every dollar of GST raised within the state. Its iron ore royalties were effectively being redistributed among the ... states and territories based on a Commonwealth Grants Commission formula that takes into account each state’s revenue sources and expenses.

Under Morrison’s deal, from 2022–23 WA must receive a minimum of 70 cents in the dollar before increasing to 75 cents in 2024–25.

Could I have an extension please? I should be able to finish in time.

[Member’s time extended.]

Ms M.M. QUIRK: The quote continues —

When the policy was put in place, it was expected iron ore prices would fall and WA’s share of the GST pool would therefore rise. Instead, prices have soared.

He concludes by saying —

Any change to the GST deal would create enormous political problems in WA ...

Certainly, his early predictions were borne out. That article was taken up by *The Age* in its editorial on 16 March this year in which it noted —

It may have sounded a reasonable safety net at the time, yet thanks to Western Australia’s unexpected good fortune the cost of making good the rest of the nation has snowballed out of control ... funded by yet more government borrowings. Senior economics correspondent Shane Wright ... calculates propping up WA’s share of the GST in make-up payments will eventually cost taxpayers over \$25 billion.

The editorial concludes —

This week, meanwhile, Premier Daniel Andrews told his federal counterparts ... “So you want to keep WA better off. Then don’t think that we are paying for it, because we are not. We are just not.” It was, frankly, a largely hollow threat given how little say Victoria has over how the GST is distributed. But Andrews is right to push back.

Victoria, and the taxpayer, cannot afford to kick the can any further down the road. It is already clear the previous Coalition government left us in a mess. Budget forecasts need to be made that take account of future revenue predictions. It appears untenable to continue the “no worse off” stop-gap beyond 2027. Yet another rethink is called for that simplifies the increasingly byzantine —

I love that word —

distribution system of GST reimbursement.

Members can see from that that it is game on. In this context, the Treasurer’s vow in his budget speech is not only timely, but a clear indication of WA’s resolve to get and keep its fair share. The Premier; Treasurer made it clear to all those who were circling —

Make no mistake, anything less than the current 70 cent GST floor—rising to 75 cents in 2024–25—would be contemptible and offensive.

Not just to this Government, but to all Western Australians.

It’s a red line that should not be crossed by any future Federal Government.

All States and the Commonwealth have benefitted from the efforts Western Australia has put in to grow our resources sector over decades.

Even with the GST floor, Western Australia still continues to receive the lowest GST share in the nation per capita, by a long, long way.

In 2023–24, we will provide a further \$2.8 billion GST subsidy to other States. In fact, higher than expected iron ore prices in WA since the reforms, are delivering an additional \$22 billion in GST to other States and Territories.

States like South Australia will receive \$8.4 billion in GST next year—compared to Western Australia’s \$6.5 billion.

Despite the fact we have about one million more residents than South Australia.

Or Tasmania, which will receive \$3.4 billion—more than half of Western Australia’s allotment.

Even though we have about five times Tasmania’s population.

Other States will attempt to erode Western Australia’s share of GST in upcoming reviews.

We cannot let that happen. We will not let that happen.

MS C.M. ROWE (Belmont) [4.06 pm]: As always, it is a bit of a tough act to follow the member for Landsdale, especially at the end of week in which we have had budget speeches all week and I happen to be the very last speaker. Nonetheless, I really want to take this opportunity to demonstrate how proud I am of this budget and the fiscal responsibility and restraint that the government has shown over the last six consecutive years. So much thought has been put into not only reducing debt—no-one wants to ponder that because the numbers really get quite big and it is hard to get your head around, but I will touch on the fact that we have a \$3.3 billion surplus. That is really commendable in light of what is going on across the globe with the terrible impact that the COVID-19 pandemic is still having on many sectors and the atrocities in Ukraine and the economic effect of that. In light of that, the Treasurer and his cabinet ministers have been able to steer us into an enviable position in terms of an Australian context.

We have achieved a surplus and we have also been able to pay down the debt that was left to us by the previous Liberal–National government by \$16 billion. To put that into context, paying down debt has resulted in a \$4.3 billion saving in interest, freeing up that money to be used for essential services. I wanted to acknowledge that because it is not something that is terribly exciting to talk about in the media. People tune out a little bit because they are such big numbers, but if a government does not have strong books, it is not well positioned to do really important things. That really boring argument that gets trotted out by the opposition all the time that Labor governments cannot manage money is just a load of rot and, once and for all, after six consecutive years of flawless financial management, we can all acknowledge and say thank goodness that we have this Labor government steering us through these times.

I am really proud of this Labor budget. It is clear that Western Australians are really at the forefront of this budget. The key area in the budget that impacts my constituency would be the cost-of-living measures, which are really fantastic. The big one is the \$400 electricity credit. This is the third type of electricity credit that the government will be giving to people, and the \$200 will be split over two cycles. This is a really important measure because we know that people are struggling. We have not only an increase in interest rates, which impacts home owners, but

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also the undeniable situation of rent increases, which is really impacting my electorate. Within the City of Belmont, 46 per cent of people are renters, which is a significant portion. Any measures that we take to the Western Australian public that help with those real struggles are absolutely fantastic and will be welcome. Therefore, those measures are in place. We are also looking at assisting small businesses to help them and to acknowledge that they are a critical part of our economy. There will be a \$650 electricity credit for eligible small businesses. I have a lot of small businesses in my electorate, and they do a great job. I am really pleased to see that they are well supported by lots of locals as well.

We are limiting the increase in fees and charges to just 2.5 per cent, which is well below inflation. We are also capping public transport fares, making travel across our suburbs really cheap, which is great. It will be free on the first Sunday of every month. We are also continuing with two free flu vaccinations this year as part of our cost-of-living package.

The other issue that I want to touch on is health because it impacts every single person in every single electorate across our state. At various times in our lives, we or our loved ones will have to utilise hospitals, and any investment that we can make into our public health system is fantastic. I would like to reiterate that we are in such a strong economic situation not by accident but because of the great planning done by this government. On top of our historical spending in health, we are investing an extra \$2.7 billion across the health and mental health sectors.

I want to highlight our track record and some of the things that we have done in health. It is really important to look at what we have done and that we continue to build on that investment. We are leading the nation in per capita spend on our hospitals, and I think that is phenomenal. We are increasing WA Health's annual budget by 33 per cent. We are increasing the Mental Health Commission's annual budget to 57.3 per cent. Over the last two years, we have added 547 new beds to the system, which is the equivalent of two tertiary hospitals. Over the last three years, we have increased WA Health's workforce by more than 22 per cent, which is an additional 1 784 nurses and 779 medical full-time equivalent staff. I think that is really commendable, and I wanted to highlight that that is what we have already done. In terms of what we are doing in this budget, an impressive \$2.7 billion is being invested in the health and mental health areas in our state.

I do not have a hospital in my electorate, but a lot of my constituents use Bentley Health Service. I was really pleased to see that that has received a \$150 million upgrade, which is a huge amount. It will help establish what is called a surgicentre, which will separate elective and emergency surgeries. That will have a really positive impact on not only my constituents, but also people right across the metro area because it will reduce wait times. There is an additional \$75 million to address emergency department pressure and ambulance ramping. I think this is a fantastic initiative, and it brings the total spend of ED-specific initiatives to over \$450 million. We will also put \$28.5 million towards attracting and retaining healthcare workers, which is a really important initiative. We can have all the hospitals and facilities, but it is crucial that we retain those qualified specialists in the medical sectors. We will spend nearly \$100 million to introduce an electronic medical record. This is a fantastic initiative that will move the health sector well and truly into the digital era, with better management of patient flow, which is fantastic. A lot is being done in that space. There will be \$544 million put towards establishing the women's and babies' hospital, which is also fantastic. I will not talk too much more about that.

I also want to highlight that we are taking mental health really seriously in this budget. One of the things that we are doing there is a \$219 million expansion to Graylands Hospital. All of us as members of Parliament not just in our work capacity, meeting with our constituents, but also in our private life know that mental health touches many people. It is very important that we make sure that facilities are available for people when they need to reach out for help and require assistance in a professional setting. We take that very seriously, and I commend the minister for her commitment to making sure that we are doing our bit to provide support when it is needed for people and their mental health.

The final point that I would like to highlight in relation to the budget is our approach to dealing with housing. Like many members have already mentioned, this issue comes up a lot in my electorate, and I think it is because 46 per cent of people in the City of Belmont are renters. They have come to me because they feel, particularly at the moment, that they are in a really precarious situation wherein their landlords pretty ruthlessly increase their rents and they are finding it incredibly difficult. Recently, one family raised with me that they had nowhere to go. They did not have family, they had a young son, and they were facing the prospect of having to stay on friends' couches because of the increase in rent. It is really quite shameful when we hear about that. These people had been long-term tenants in the same house, and they were devastated at how, overnight, their lives were suddenly turned upside down. We are making sure that we invest substantial and significant money in social housing, and I think it is at record levels. Our total investment in social housing and homelessness initiatives has grown to \$2.6 billion. That is quite a staggering investment. It will obviously enhance our social housing stock quite out of sight. I want to again point to what we have already done.

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Our track record is really impressive. We have already delivered an additional 1 200 social housing homes and we are looking to increase that to 4 000 homes. We understand that that will not provide immediate support to people on the waiting list, but it is certainly an historic amount of money that is being dedicated to the housing situation at the moment. It is well and truly overdue. The minister has been doing a huge amount of work in the social housing space. There are also other measures he has committed to looking at. We are allocating \$33 million to extend the off-the-plan transfer duty rebate. We are lifting the threshold for exemptions and concessions. We are providing \$55 million for upgrades to water infrastructure. This will actually unlock housing and land supply right across the metropolitan area, including around the Metronet precincts. I have one of those in my electorate down in Redcliffe. They are a few points I wanted to discuss. I think they demonstrate how this budget really puts Western Australians at the forefront. We are looking at how we can help people manage their daily lives, including cost-of-living pressures, which are huge, certainly for people in my electorate. We are looking at what we can do to not only put more money into our health system to make sure we are giving patients the very best care and facilities, but also provide critical infrastructure for mental health patients. We are also investing record amounts of money to address homelessness and provide extra social housing opportunities for people. I am incredibly proud of the work that our government has done to get us to this point. There is much more contained in this budget and I would love to go on, but I am very aware that we have heard a lot of speeches about how wonderful this budget is and I am aware of the time. I really do commend these bills to the house.

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Leader of the House) [4.20 pm] — in reply: I am responding on behalf of the Treasurer. On behalf of the Treasurer, I thank members who have contributed to the debate as part of the budget consideration. Members have spoken on the impact in their electorates and the state more generally of the state budget handed down by the Treasurer last Thursday. I thank members for their contributions, research and for their passion for their individual communities. I acknowledge that the consideration in detail stage of the budget is, of course, next week during the estimates debate. I am sure that many questions will be asked and line items interrogated very effectively by some great minds. With that, the Treasurer is very appreciative of the contributions of all the members to the debate on the 2023 budget.

I commend the bills to the house.

Questions put and passed.

Bills read a second time.

Pursuant to standing order 222, bills and estimates referred to Estimates Committees A and B.